

CASE STUDY

PROCTER AND GAMBLE: WAYS OF WORKING THAT ENHANCE WELLBEING

HOW P&G MADE ITS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY A BUSINESS STRATEGY THAT THE ORGANISATION RALLIED BEHIND

How P&G took its Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy from a topic that had variable engagement from select colleagues, to a business strategy that the whole organisation rallied behind and ran with. It used the need for reflection and review brought by COVID-19 to its advantage, though the same principles could be applied using a different compelling call to action.

Introduction

P&G is a business with purpose – it wants to be a force for good and a force for growth. The company has been stepping up for more than 180 years and will continue to push itself forward to do more as an employer. The extraordinary events of 2020 and 2021 have made it clear that brands and companies have a responsibility to society and the world around us. The force for good and force for growth concept is an important one. P&G serves shareholders and investors, but it also serves its employees. To this end, P&G has an unwavering commitment to wellbeing, mental health and being a responsible employer. For around ten years P&G has been working to increase knowledge, understanding and to open conversations around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. It has also been looking to increase manager capability and provide appropriate support in this area. The company has made significant progress, with individuals sharing their experiences of mental



health and running events to raise awareness, though it felt that some of the activity in this space could be seen as 'one-off' events, rather than something truly embedded in the business. It was also clear that there were pockets of work (e.g., events and external speakers) and certain areas of the business that were further ahead in this space. With the coronavirus pandemic, there was a unique opportunity to step up and step forward, and P&G took it.

What P&G did

P&G reviewed the areas where it had traction and expertise and considered what made these mental health programmes a success. Based on this, it called out three clear areas that became the base



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expectation for every site across P&G Northern Europe (UK, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway).

- 1. Clear direction and ownership from business leadership.** To get the priority and focus it required, organisational leaders needed to see this as their responsibility and to take ownership for driving it forward. Different data points were used to influence leadership to take action where they were not already.
- 2. Increased employee self-awareness and increased general understanding of the topic across entire employee population.** There was a desire for employees to feel more comfortable and open in talking about the subject, so sharing knowledge and making it part of the communication drumbeat was an obvious next step. Focus then turned to tools, trainings and talk sheets which would encourage self-reflection and enable conversation early (e.g., team discussions, focus on awareness days, discussions of mental health in employee townhalls, resilience training podcasts).
- 3. Provide multiple, easy-to-access, quality avenues of support (via managers, EAP, apps, occupational health).** In the event that employees did need support, it was recognised that what was viewed as 'support' would be very individual. Therefore a broad range of services were set up both internally and externally with the medical insurance provider, from talking support to gamified apps, from equipped managers to strangers. This ensured that if ever anyone was to find themselves in need of mental wellbeing support, they would know where to find resources and would have an option that felt comfortable to them.

In order to truly embed this, it was recognised that it couldn't be seen as a 'HR Initiative' and that to really make a difference there needed to be multiple people driving this in different ways (e.g., a

colleague sharing their story, an expert training line manager, an organisation leader setting the tone) and therefore a number of roles were designed with different expectations to drive the right outcomes

Impact

While there is further to go, these actions have made a significant impact to P&G.

- Leaders recognise the importance of driving wellbeing and creating an environment where individuals can speak up early, and they are finding authentic ways to set this direction.
- More and more employees are stepping forward to share their personal stories to further break down stigma and increase awareness and understanding.
- There are huge numbers of passionate employees who are committed to driving this area forward. They have taken ownership and leadership in their departments to run programmes, organise events, share learning in department meetings and share these examples across organisation. This has led to organic growth and P&G cannot keep up with the training demand.
- As a result of the tools, trainings and talk sheets there has been an increase in self-reflection and proactive conversation. Individuals have been observed sharing concerns early, enabling P&G to understand and make adjustments, rather than seeing prolonged periods of sickness absence.

Call to action

Consider where you want to be five years from now, rather than focusing on where you are today, and work back from that to understand the steps you need to take. Ensure you have the right buy-in and resources to make it happen – as it really does take the full organisation.

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